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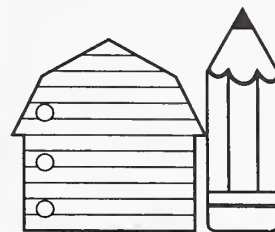
# Ag in the Classroom

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# Notes

United States  
Department of  
Agriculture



A bi-monthly newsletter for the Agriculture in the Classroom Program. Sponsored by the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture to help students understand the important role of agriculture in the United States economy. For information, contact the AITC Director, Room 4307, South Bldg., USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250-0991. 202/720-7925.

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## 14th National Conference a Success

The largest National Conference on Agriculture in the Classroom in history was held in Monterey, California. The more than 400 participants represented the diversity that makes the Ag in the Classroom effort nationwide such a success. They came from 46 states. They were teachers, agribusiness leaders, college professors, and volunteers. But all shared a concern for promoting agricultural literacy in our nation's next generation.

A day-long series of preconference workshops were well attended. Topics included Let's Go Surfing: Connecting to the Internet, Happiness is High Yield Agriculture, Desktop Publishing, and Planting Seeds in the Curriculum.

The conference program also reflected the wide range of topics that are part of today's AITC programs. Speakers ranged from California's Secretary of Agriculture Ann Veneman to Howard Helmer, World Record Holder in the Guinness Book of World Records who led participants in a Make-Your-Own-Omelette Breakfast. Later, Cathy Baranek and Marilyn Relles helped the group bake bread. That was topped off with homemade butter, thanks to Lynn Bly, state contact in New Hampshire and the Granite State Dairy Promotion Board.

Participants met two authors: Chris Petersen, author of *Harvest Year*, and David Masumoto, whose *Epitaph for a Peach* is reviewed in this edition of *Notes*. They also attended a variety of workshops. Topics included Agricultural Stereotypes in Children's Books, Bringing Seasons Into Your Classroom, Cotton's Journey From Seed to

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*Scenes from the 14th  
Annual Conference*



## From the Director:

As I am sure many of you heard, the 1996 National Ag in the Classroom Conference in Monterey, California, was a tremendous success! The attendance of 400 broke the largest attendance record of 250 at the Kansas City Conference and was 100 more than we expected. Many, many thanks to our speakers, the California Foundation for Ag in the Classroom staff members, and the planning committee for their hard work to conduct such an excellent educational event. The site and dates of the 1997 conference will be announced in our next newsletter.

This issue of "Notes" provides us with an opportunity to introduce you to a wonderful new author. David Masumoto spoke at the 1996 National Ag in the Classroom Conference and had us alternately laughing and choked with emotion. His love of the land and descriptions

of farm life speak to the heart. Mike Jarman's middle school lesson plans will help educators utilize this wonderful book in classrooms.

Our newest Ag on the Internet address is the Foreign Ag Service (FAS). FAS is the newest USDA partner to work with Ag in the Classroom. You will be hearing more about international agriculture in future issues.

This issue also highlights another outstanding teacher. If you would like to share your efforts, please call or write our office. We will need photographs if it is to be included in *Notes*.

We look forward to hearing from you. Please enjoy this issue of our newsletter.

*Elizabeth A. Wolanyk*

Elizabeth A. Wolanyk

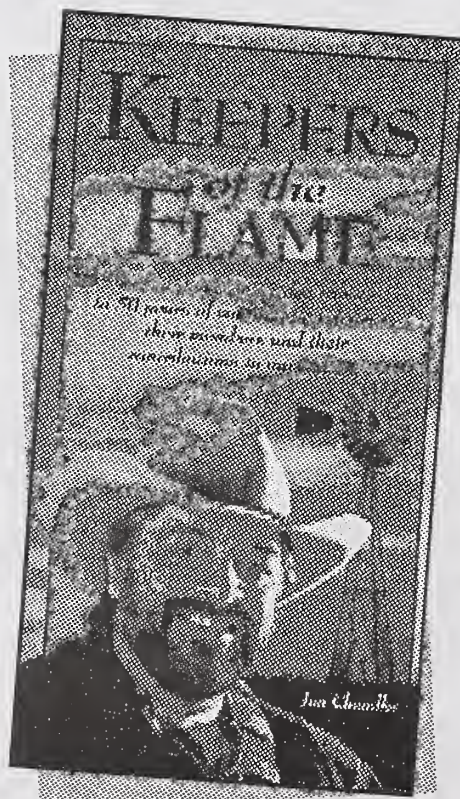
## Videos Highlight Conservation and Carrots

*Jon Chandler wrote and performed Keepers of the Flame*

Whether the topic is carrots or conservation, two new agricultural videos will be sure to interest students of all ages.

### **Keepers of the Flame**

This seven-minute music video is a heartfelt tribute to our nation's conservation farmers and ranchers. Jon Chandler, a Denver-based musician, wrote and performed *Keepers of the Flame*, which was released in celebration of the 50th anniversary of the National Association of Conservation Districts.



Filmed at a working farm near Perry, Iowa, the video is an emotional patchwork of scenes from the past and the present. There's also a nod of the head to those who will carry on the important work of soil and water conservation in the future.

*Keepers of the Flame* is available for \$7 plus shipping and handling, which varies by location. Order by phone at 1-800-825-5547 or by writing the national Association of Conservation Districts, 408 E. Main, P.O. Box 855, League City, TX 77574-0855.

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## Wyoming Students Learn that Ranchers Are Environmentalists

"Ranchers are truly the world's first and best environmentalists," says Margy Steidley, a teacher at Lander South Elementary School in Lander, Wyoming. She and her third grade students have become local experts on ranching because of a year-long project designed to teach students about one of Wyoming's most important industries.

The Nature Conservancy owns the Red Canyon Ranch, located about 25 miles from Lander. Steidley and her students visited three times—once in the fall, once in the winter, and once in the spring. "Making return visits to the same place allowed students to sharpen their powers of observation," Steidley says.

Each visit was designed with a slightly different focus. One time, students learned about pasturing. They were amazed to discover that Bob Budd, who manages the ranch, uses graphs to plan his pasturing throughout the year. "Students were excited because they were learning graphing in school and could see the relationship between what they had learned and this real-world activity," Steidley explains.

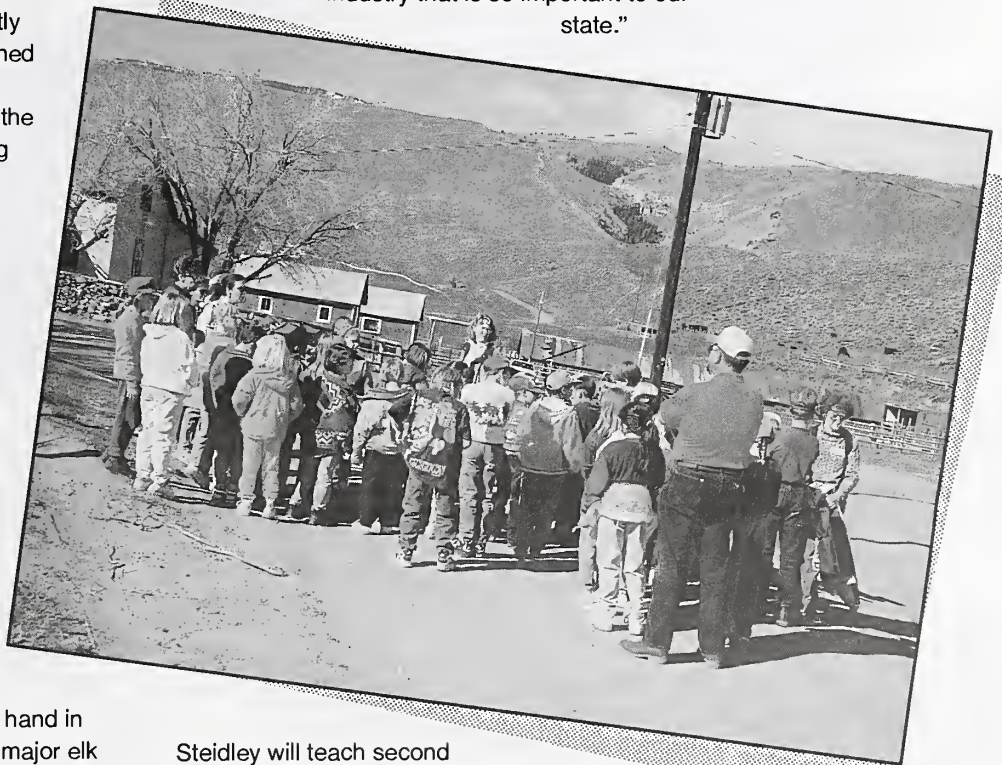
On other visits, students looked at different kinds of habitat necessary for both the ranch animals and the wildlife animals. "The emphasis was both agricultural and environmental," Steidley says. That combination, she believes, is essential for successful ranchers. "They are good stewards of the land. They have to be."

Red Canyon Ranch is a working ranch that is designed to demonstrate that ranching and environmentalism go hand in hand. For example, the ranch lies on a major elk migratory route. Grazing is scheduled to accommodate the migration route of the elk, Steidley's students learned.

In addition to making three trips to Red Canyon Ranch, the class also visited a more traditional ranch. "It was good for my students to see the similarities and differences in the two operations."

Steidley was able to devote so much time to the study of ranching because the district's science curriculum emphasizes agriculture. That's no accident—she was a prime mover in changing the curriculum to reflect the agricultural focus.

"Several years ago, I was reading one of the *Little House* books to my students," she explains. It talked about a threshing machine. My students had no idea what that was," she says. She began to see what else her students knew—and didn't know. "One thing sort of led to another, and by the time our science curriculum came up for review, I knew I wanted to help our children learn about the industry that is so important to our state."



Steidley will teach second grade this fall. But she plans to continue her agricultural emphasis. "There's so much for students to learn," she says. "The younger they start, the better."

*Ranchers are environmentalists, these third grade students learn.*



## Food For America Revised

Ask elementary students about agriculture and they'll probably conjure up images of something like "Old MacDonald's Farm." Chances are they don't think about the processing, services, regulation, marketing, and many other facets of the industry of agriculture.

*Food For America*, a series of lessons and activities for students in grades 1-6, makes students more aware of the world of agriculture and how it affects their daily lives. Produced by the National FFA Organization, *Food For America* includes lessons and activities on production agriculture, processing, distribution, nutrition, food safety, trade and marketing, environment, careers, and agricultural history.

The lessons are divided into primary (for grades 1-3) and upper elementary (for grades 4-6). Each of the 27 lessons begins with a concise statement of the areas and items covered and the grade level suggested. Learner outcomes and background information follow. Each lesson is accompanied by one or more activity sheets.

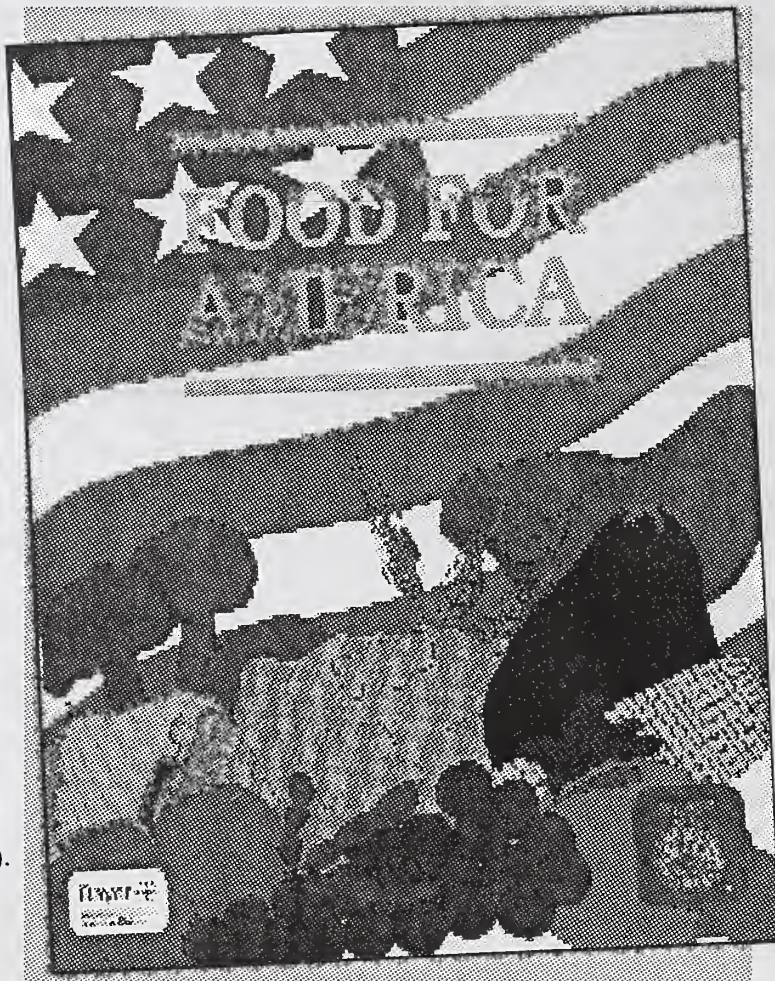
The flexible resource package is designed to integrate into existing curriculum. For example, in the lesson "Agriculture by the Numbers," students practice their graphing skills as they chart how the farm population has changed from 1790 until now and how the numbers of people fed by each farmer has changed during the same time.

Environmentalism is an important emphasis in *Food For America*. Lessons like "Farmers Love the Land" and "Soil Conservation" help students

understand more about how farmers are stewards of the land and water.

Students also learn about modern agriculture. In "How Food Moves From Farm to You," they learn that the dinner they eat tonight may have traveled by boat, boxcar, truck, and airplane before reaching their table. In "Careers in Agriculture," students investigate careers that may interest them.

The *Food For America* teaching kit includes a short video that can be used to introduce any of the lessons in the teaching package. The complete package is \$24.95. Order from the National FFA Organization, 703-780-5600.



*Food For America* includes a series of lessons for students in grades 1-6.





## Epitaph for a Peach

"Farmers need to tell our stories more often," believes author David Masumoto. "When we tell stories, we capture the emotions and the value of our work—and our relationship to the land."

Masumoto, a third generation farmer, has told his story in *Epitaph for a Peach: Four Seasons on My Family Farm*. This lyrical book tells the story of Masumoto's efforts to market his Sun Crest peaches, which he calls "one of the last remaining, truly juicy peaches." This once popular variety has been replaced in supermarkets by newer peaches with longer shelf lives—but less flavor.

"I consider myself a farmer first and a writer second," Masumoto says. "But it's a close second." Readers discover that while Masumoto is talking about growing peaches, he is also writing about nature, agriculture, the Asian American experience, and a way of life. Brief excerpts of *Epitaph for a Peach* illustrate why the book has received glowing reviews in publications ranging from *New York Times Book Review* to *Eating Well Magazine*.

On manure piles: "A common practice was to buy manure in the good years in order to build up the soil. I could identify which neighbor had a good year by the direction of the wind and the smell of profits being returned to the earth."

On farm dust: "All good farmers become connoisseurs of dirt and dust. My dust is a fine powder. The soil is a sandy loam that would be a chef's delight. Add water to the earth and create a rich roux, thick but pliable. Stir and the air will be filled with a rich aroma of turned earth. . . . I lick my lips often when working in my dust."



Masumoto is already at work on his next book. "It will deal with family again. Since we're a century farm family, the new book involves a history of our family and farming."

*Epitaph for a Peach* was published by Harper San Francisco. It is available in bookstores for \$20.

*Epitaph for a Peach is a lyrical look that centers on the author's efforts to market Sun Crest peaches.*

Teacher Mike Jarman has developed a lesson plan for *Epitaph for a Peach*. Copies are available on a cost recovery basis. For more information contact Mike Jarman, 5825 E. Del Monte, Fresno, CA 93727.



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### The Carrot Highway

The first orange carrot wasn't discovered until the 1600's. Before that, these versatile vegetables were purple, green, yellow, and even tan.

Interesting facts like these are part of *The Carrot Highway*, a whimsical story that takes viewers around the world. Produced by carrot farmer Ron Wyss, *The Carrot Highway* informs young viewers while entertaining them.

A combination of humor and facts makes this 40-minute video appeal to a wide age range. It would be especially appropriate for upper elementary and middle grades, but would also appeal to younger children.

The video shows viewers about the people who bring this crop to the table—from the scientists who develop carrot seed to the truck drivers who transport it. It teaches the basics of genetics: carrots today are sweeter and better tasting than those available in the 1950s, thanks to the breakthrough research of Dr. Henry Munger.

The video also shows how carrots are grown for seed and how the seed is processed and distributed. *The Carrot Highway* ends with spectacular footage of carrots being processed: peeled, polished, sorted, bagged, cut, and frozen.

*The Carrot Highway* is available for \$14.95 plus \$2.95 shipping and handling. (Ohio residents add 6 percent sales tax.) Contact Whisper Products, 3686 County Road 60, Ada, OH 45810; or call 1-800-631-6236.



A favorite vegetable is the focus of a 40-minute video titled *The Carrot Highway*





# I N T E R N E T

## Ag on the Internet: Foreign Agricultural Service

Whether you're looking for information about export programs, want to learn more about U.S. trade policy, or are conducting foreign market research, FAS Online probably has what you're looking for. The Internet service, provided by the Foreign Agricultural Service, also includes general information about FAS programs, resources, and services.

The address for the FAS Home Page is:

<http://www.usda.gov/fas>

Online, the address is:

<http://www.ffas.usda.gov/ffas>

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You, Adopt-a-Classroom and Pen Pal Programs, Program Evaluation, Nuts and Bolts of Producing a Reader, and Funding Classroom Projects.

The students who are the primary focus of AITC programs were present at the conclusion of the conference when teacher Carla Wright and her students shared what

they'd learned about agriculture. They also sang agricultural songs, including "Dirt Made My Lunch."

The conference also saw the creation of a consortium of state Ag in the Classroom programs. This consortium will enable AITC programs to have a voice at the national level on issues that relate to agricultural literacy.



The individuals listed here are key reference persons in each state. If you have any questions, want to make reports, or need more information about your state's Ag in the Classroom program, contact the following:

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